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[Tomatoes, abundant in your garden, or the market and their uses]

A radio talk by Rowena Schmidt Carpenter, Bureau of Home Economics, delivered through radio station WRC and 43 other associate NBC stations, Thursday, September 24, 1931.

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How do you do, Homemakers?

There is an old saying "Bargains are dear to every woman's heart!". I believe there is something in that idea, and that's the reason I am going to talk to you today about tomatoes, while they are still abundant in your garden or the market. And tomatoes are a bargain in the food line, you know, not only because they are many times inexpensive either raw or canned, but because, too, of their special food value, and the many ways they can be used. If any one wanted to do it just for a kind of stunt, she could feature tomatoes in every course of the most elaborate dinner, beginning with a cold tomato cocktail or a hot bouillon, continuing with a fish or entree served with a touch of catsup or chili sauce, varying the kind of tomato dish in the main course, offering something still different for the salad, and introducing tomato preserves with the dessert. Nothing practical in that idea except that it reminds us that since tomato concoctions are so numerous, there need be no monotony in the menu when they are used day after day.

Here in this Bureau we have been so grateful to the tomato, especially in its canned state, as we have planned low-cost meals for families who have a very small food budget. There just isn't another single vegetable that contributes so much in the way of vitamins and minerals for any amount of money to be spent as tomatoes do. So, when food money is very limited and there can be only a few of the watery, colorful, flavorful fruits and vegetables allowed in the course of the week, tomatoes climb right up to the place of importance that they deserve in all of our homes.

It hasn't been so very long, only about three generations, that we have appreciated tomatoes. There was a time in the past when they were not even used as food, though nearly 350 years ago tomatoes were described by some botanists in other countries as a vegetable to be eaten with pepper, salt and oil. Perhaps some of you remember when tomatoes were called "love apples" here and in France and England. And the Italians who use the tomato in almost as many ways as we, call it "the golden apple" even now.

We Americans are the leaders in the consumption of tomatoes. One of our prominent nutrition chemists a few years ago described them as a palatable source of three vitamins, and now we know that the tomato is valuable for four vitamins: A, B, C, and G, and that it is distinguished for retaining its vitamin C content even when cooked or canned. That is why tomato juice even from canned tomatoes may be substituted for orange juice in the daily diet of infants and young children. Tomatoes contain valuable mineral salts too. It is because of these special qualities retained in the cooked state, and because of their comparative cheapness the year around, that tomatoes rank with spinach, lettuce and the other green-leaf vegetables, and with oranges and carrots in dietary qualities.

So while there is the present urge to make wise use of all food products, saving the surplus for yourselves or for the needy this winter, I wanted to call your attention especially to the biggest food bargain, nutritionally speaking, that the vegetable market offers.

With vegetable cocktails such a sensible fad, a new use for tomatoes has developed. Even in the mixed vegetable cocktail made of a combination of flavors, the delicate acid flavor and rich red color of the tomato makes it almost indispensable. Vegetable cocktails may be made up now and canned for the winter, or tomatoes canned whole or in the form of strained juice may be worked up as wanted later on. The Bureau has a number of interesting suggestions on tomato and combination vegetable cocktails.

In the relish line, there are perhaps no two more popular favorites than catsup and chili sauce; good uses for some of the ripe tomatoes still abundant in many sections of the United States.

And just before the frost comes, we will gather in all of the green tomatoes because they lend themselves to almost as many ways of preparing as the red ones. For the last three or four years every early fall has brought us many hundreds of requests for our green tomato recipes, --for cream of green tomato soup, stewed, scalloped and fried green tomatoes, green tomato mince meat, and so on. And our pickle and relish recipes make use of many green tomatoes too. While not quite such a good source of vitamins when green, they do have some vitamin content, and this increases as they ripen when stored. So it is worth while to select a good supply of your large, sound green tomatoes, wrap them singly and place them in a cool, dark place to get ripe.

If you are interested in tomatoes as a bargain in nutritive value, for immediate table use or to save for winter, let us send you our tomato recipes from the Bureau of Home Economics in Washington. Goodbye, Homemakers, until next Thursday.